

**By Patrick Disney**

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Increasing ties between American and Iranian civil society leaders is "extraordinarily important," according to Leonard Leo, the Chair of the **US Commission on International Religious Freedom**, who also testified before the hearing. "American NGOs can help stand up this very important movement in Iran."

Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), a commission member, agreed with many of the witnesses on the importance of international action, such as calling for a special session of the UN Human Rights Council to investigate Iranian abuses. Additionally, there was unanimous agreement that the United States cannot be complicit in the repression going on in Iran, particularly in silencing the Iranian people's right to peaceful protest.